# Time for a Reset? U.S.-China Relations during the Biden Administration

*January 11, 2021 Zoom Webinar*

*The Miller Center is pleased to have partnered with the Center for American Studies at Fudan University in Shanghai to produce this symposium on the prospects for U.S.-China relations as the Biden administration takes office in Washington. This hybrid event was broadcast in front of a live audience at Fudan University and a virtual audience in the United States and around the world. The recording is available for later viewing on the Miller Center YouTube channel here and event page here, as well as in China.*

*This program is co-sponsored by UVA Global and the UVA Center for Politics.*

## Summary

Have major recent developments in China and the United States raised the possibility that the U.S.-China relationship, which has become increasingly strained over the last 10 years, might now move in new and more positive directions? The first panel discusses the November 2020 elections in the United States, providing an analysis of the election campaigns, the electoral process, the outcomes of the elections, and the transition from the Trump Administration to the Biden Administration. It then examines the Fifth Plenum of the Chinese Communist Party's Central Committee in October, which discussed the foreign and domestic economic policies underlying China's new five-year plan that will begin in 2021. The second panel analyzes the implications of these events for Chinese policy toward the U.S. and American policy toward China, assessing the prospects for both change and continuity.

## Panel I: Domestic Politics in the U.S. and China

### Opening Remarks

- William J. Antholis, director and CEO, Miller Center, University of Virginia

### Panelists

- Larry J. Sabato, founder and director, Center for Politics, University of Virginia
- Chris Lu, Teresa A. Sullivan Practitioner Senior Fellow, Miller Center, University of Virginia
- Kathryn Dunn Tenpas, practitioner senior fellow, Miller Center, University of Virginia
- Xin Qiang, deputy director, Center for American Studies, Fudan University

### Moderator

- Syaru Shirley Lin, Compton Visiting Professor in World Politics, Miller Center, University of Virginia

## Audio Transcript[1]

BILL ANTHOLIS:

Good evening to those of you who joined us from the United States, and good morning to everyone joining from China and elsewhere in Asia. I guess it's a fun thing to be able to say, "Good Morning" to Tomorrow, for those of you that are already in the 12th of January. We are delighted to have all of you gathered to celebrate another milestone in the extensive relationship between Fudan University and the University of Virginia. That relationship has developed over the course of just a few years. Our two universities have coalesced to create opportunities for students and teachers alike, at both Fudan University and here in Charlottesville at the University of Virginia.

This partnership resulted in the creation of the UVA Shanghai First Program, a program for incoming first-years, offering them the opportunity to study abroad alongside Fudan students. Unfortunately, the program had to be postponed from its launch date in the fall of 2020, but we are excited to offer the opportunity in years to come. And as the novel coronavirus shut down the majority of UVA study abroad opportunities, both because of COVID and related travel restrictions, so too were 75 students from China prohibited from coming to the United States. So, as such, Fudan took these students in, where they have been learning alongside students in Shanghai. We are excited to welcome many of them virtually today with the hopes of having them here in Charlottesville in person at some points soon. Thank you to everyone at Fudan for all that you have done. We are excited to see this partnership grow and prosper. And at a time when bilateral relations had been filled with strife, university partnerships like this one can provide frank exchanges that help deepen and advanced mutual understanding. On a personal note, I was last at Fudan in 2012, when I was with the Brookings Institution, and was hosted for a meeting with faculty and students for a book I was writing called, *Inside Out India and China: Local Politics Go Global*. It is a special University and truly one of the leading places in China that studies and provides exchanges with the United States.

We'd like to thank the Center for American Studies and Professor WU Xinbo for diligently working to make today's Forum happen. Also, on behalf of all of us here at the Miller Center, thank you to the Center for Politics and UVA Global for partnering with us on this event. We could not have made this happen without you.

From Shanghai to Charlottesville, we find ourselves in a pivotal moment on so many fronts—and significantly so for the future of U.S.-China relations—on a range of global issues from the pandemic, to the global economy, to climate change. This bilateral relationship is essential to coming up with global solutions. And yet both nations are wrestling with the disruptions of globalization, from concerns about displaced jobs, to global trade, to mutual vulnerability due to the global coronavirus pandemic. So as we in the United States look past the Trump

presidency, the core questions are whether President-Elect Biden's policies on China will continue with the incendiary rhetoric and confrontational politics on the pandemic, on trade and security, on Hong Kong and Taiwan. Under President Trump our two economies began to decouple. Reversing that trend does not appear to be at the top of President-Elect Biden's to-do list. Similarly, in the recent Fifth Plenum on the Chinese Communist Party's Central Committee in October, the Party set goals to become self-sufficient in various areas, including technology and security, effectively aiming to cut the United States out where possible. Each country seems to be retreating from the other.

That being said, these are early days for the Biden presidency. The president-elect has yet to outline many specific China policies. On many potent issues, the president-elect will likely consult and work closely with top officials, such as his Secretary of State, Secretary of Defense, U.S. Trade Representative, and various China experts. Furthermore, both the president-elect himself, and some of his nominees, have named alliance building and alliance mending as top priorities. Over the course of his campaign, he highlighted the importance of strong bilateral relations, but also in rediscovering America's global and inter and multilateral presence. So, one can expect he will consult with European, Japanese, Korean, Indian and Australian leaders, among others. He can also be expected to work to forge bipartisan agreement on the bilateral relationship. Likewise, China will need to determine how it views a Biden presidency.

To help us parse through all of the potential these next four years hold, and the various complicating factors, we are delighted to have two panels of talented and wise scholars to share their insights. I want to thank all of our panelists for joining us tonight (or tomorrow) and we are excited to embark on this conversation. As our guests in China are about to see, we have assembled a truly first-rate group of some of the best minds on these issues in the United States, and I want to thank all of them for joining us on what will be surely a fascinating conversation. I also want to thank the production teams at both Fudan and at the Miller Center, who have worked hard to coordinate for this terrific and complicated event.

So now I'll hand the microphone to the exceptionally talented and creative Shirley Lin. Shirley is the Compton Visiting Professor at the Miller Center and has been the principal designer behind tonight's event. Thank you Shirley for all that you do, and over to you.

SYARU SHIRLEY LIN:

Thank you very much, Bill. Welcome everyone to this Forum, which includes a live audience in Shanghai, as you can see. It's been a pleasure to put this program together with Fudan friends to strengthen understanding between the U.S. and China in a pivotal moment in the two countries' relationship. I want to thank all the panelists and fellow moderator, Ambassador Steve Mull, and our colleagues, Justin O'Jack and Stefanie Georgakis, who have made this possible. Allow me to present our four wonderful experts for the first panel on "Domestic Politics in the U.S. and China."

Professor Larry Sabato is the founder of the University of Virginia's Center for Politics. A leader

in political forecasting, Larry is well known for his newsletter, “Sabato’s Crystal Ball,” and appears regularly on major television networks. He will analyze the 2020 election campaigns, the outcomes and the controversies surrounding them. Next is our Miller Center’s Kathryn Tenpas, an expert on the American presidency, who is like me, also a non-resident senior fellow at the Brookings Institution. Katie will place the Biden transition in an historical perspective and also assess Biden's appointments so far, focusing on pressures to have more diversity and Obama alumni in the administration. Our third panelist is also our Miller Center’s Chris Lu, who previously served as deputy secretary of labor, White House cabinet secretary and assistant to President Obama. Currently on Biden's transition team, he will assess how domestic issues influence the elections and effect America's foreign policy going forward. Finally, Professor XIN Qiang, who is the deputy director of the Center for American Studies, has published numerous award-winning books around the world in English and in Chinese. He will analyze the October 2020 Fifth Plenum of the Chinese Communist Party’s Central Committee and discuss the implications of Beijing's domestic and foreign policy agenda contained in China's new Five-Year Plan that starts this year. So let me hand it over to Larry. Thank you.

LARRY SABATO:

Thank you so much, Shirley, and it's good to see you. It’s good to see the other panelists, most of whom I know in one capacity or another. I've got eight minutes to discuss the presidential election of 2020. I couldn't even begin to cover the headlines in that period of time, but I'm going to mention a few key facts, many of which you probably are already familiar with, but I want to stress several.

The first is, despite what you may have seen President Trump saying, this was an extraordinarily secure and accurate election. Virtually everything that President Trump has had to say about the election is false. All of his attacks on state election officials, on the final count, on the supposed vote fraud in Georgia and Pennsylvania and elsewhere, has absolutely no basis in fact. And if you have followed President Trump's career, you won't be at all surprised by this. One of my former students, in fact, was in charge of running the security for the election. His name is Christopher Krebs, former head of the cyber security part of Homeland Security, dedicated to protecting the election in every way that he could reasonably do. We had a problem with this in 2016. But he did a superb job. He was lauded by both parties—everybody involved in the election—and for his trouble he was fired on Twitter by President Trump, because President Trump wanted him to tell an untruth, which was that the election was not secure and that vote fraud had switched hundreds of thousands or millions of votes to Trump's disfavor. In any event, Chris is doing just fine, and will be doing lots of things, including being a visiting scholar at my Center for Politics at UVA. So the election was completely sound.

The second fact I want to stress is that President-Elect Biden won a *very* solid victory. He got an absolute majority of the vote (51.4%), and in this era that's nearly a landslide. And what do I mean by that? We live in highly partisan times, and people take their party identification very seriously, whether they're Democrats or Republicans, and tiny percentages are affiliated with the Libertarian Party or the Green Party or some other political association, but

overwhelmingly—in fact 95% to 96% or more—of the American electorate identifies with either the Democratic Party or the Republican Party. And not surprisingly about 95% of Democrats voted for Biden and 95% of Republicans voted for Trump. The good news for Biden is there are more Democrats than Republicans, particularly after the unusual events of the Trump presidency over the last four years. So Biden got the absolute majority. He won by seven million votes.

Unfortunately, in the United States, because of an archaic institution called the Electoral College, which dates from the very beginning of the American constitutional republic, the popular vote means nothing nationally. It means everything in each of our 50 states, plus the District of Columbia. They're assigned electoral votes based on their population, but small populated states get a bonus. They get two extra votes for their senators. Highly populated states do too, but it matters much more for the small states. And that's how Republicans win the presidency. George W. Bush won the presidency in 2000, even though he lost the popular vote by 549,000. We thought that was a lot in 2000. And now, of course, we recognize that you can win the presidency, even when you lose the popular vote in a landslide. Hillary Clinton in 2016 defeated President Trump in terms of the popular vote by close to three million votes, yet she lost decisively in the Electoral College. Fortunately, for President-Elect Biden, he won by seven million votes, and that was enough to carry some key swing states—narrowly—so that he could win the Electoral College, even though he had very close races in some of the swing states, he was able to accumulate 306 electoral votes. Under our system, you need 270 electoral votes (a majority of the Electoral College) to win the presidency. And you may say, "Well 306 doesn't sound like much, since you need 270." Well, it was called a landslide by President Trump in 2016, because he received 306 electoral votes. Exactly the same total. Different states, but the same total.

Joe Biden was able to win back the formerly Democratic states of Pennsylvania, Michigan, and Wisconsin, and he also carried two states that have been very elusive for Democrats for many, many years: Arizona and Georgia. He also won individual congressional districts, one individual congressional district in Nebraska; President Trump won the other one in Maine. So the total is actually quite impressive. In the Electoral College, the total of popular votes is even more so. He has a firm base from which to govern. He has a diverse cabinet being formed, which nicely matches his vice presidential choice, Senator Kamala Harris from California. And she will be the first woman to be vice president. She is of Indian descent/black descent. She connects with lots of constituencies in the United States, and she will have a major role now because of what happened in the congressional elections.

The House of Representatives is staying democratic. The Democrats won the House in the midterm election, in the middle of Donald Trump's one term for president, in 2018. And the Democrats won it fairly handily. This time, I think the surprise was that Democrats actually lost seats in the House, but they've maintained the majority. They have 222 seats. It could expand it to 223 once the final races are decided. You need 218 to control. So they'll be able to manage, and the Speaker Nancy Pelosi, who's continuing in that role, is very skilled at running the House.

She has had two separate stints as Speaker of the House, from 2007 to 2011, and then a separate stint beginning in 2019.

The Senate was the surprise. Democrats had many opportunities to carry Senate seats and should have had a majority as of the November 3rd general election, but there were some close races that didn't go their way. And again, the partisanship played apart. It's almost impossible anymore to win a Senate seat, or for that matter a House seat, if it's not carried by the nominee of your party for president. So in the Senate races, for example, you had just one Senate seat in the state of Maine that was won by a Republican, while the Democrat, Joe Biden, was winning the presidency. All of the other Senate seats were won by the nominee of the party that was winning the presidency in that state, and in 2016 it was 100% of the states that had Senate seats up elected senators from the same party as the winning presidential candidate in their state. So, again, because it's difficult to break that partisan barrier, it's remarkable that the Democrats won the presidency by the amount they did. They kept the House. And with special elections for two seats in Georgia, which just occurred on January 5, they won both of the seats in a pretty conservative state. Biden won it very narrowly (10,000 to 12,000 votes total), which is nothing in a state the size of Georgia. But the two Senate candidates for the Democrats, both of whom had been expected to lose when the campaign started because people wanted to send a message to Donald Trump, the Democrats won both of them, in a considerable upset, and they won by very substantial margins of 50,000 to 70,000 votes.

So the Democrats control the Senate, because of the tie-breaking vote of the vice president, Vice President Harris. It's 50 Democrats/50 Republicans, but the vice president breaks all ties, so the Senate will be organized for Democrats, thanks to the tie-breaking vote. The Senate will vote for most of President Biden's objectives and plans and programs and the bills he submits, because of the 50/50 split with the tie broken by the vice president. So actually, things are beautifully set up for President-Elect Biden, at least in the beginning. An act of God on any given day can change the composition of the Senate, or for that matter the House. And if we have more invasions of Capitol Hill, like the despicable one that we saw last Wednesday, January 6th, by a mob that was incited by President Trump, and for which he will probably be impeached in a couple of days' time. Now he won't leave office early, because it will simply go to the Senate for trial. We're not sure of whether the trial will be held right away or will be delayed until President Biden gets his Cabinet confirmed and much of his program through. But this has been a chaotic, very discouraging, very autocratic, authoritarian and un-American presidency, and most of us are delighted that it is coming to an end.

I hope you don't mind my being so frank, but that's the way I am. We are concerned about the last few days of the Trump presidency, because he is capable of absolutely anything. Absolutely anything. But he's being watched carefully, in ways that he may not quite imagine, and I think we'll make it through. The President (the new president) is sworn-in at noon on January the 20th, and we'll all breathe a little easier, because I think President Biden is more predictable. He is certainly more cautious, and in every way I can think of, he is more prudent than President Trump.

KATHRYN DUNN TENPAS:

Thank you so much for inviting me. I'm delighted to be here, and I've been asked to talk about the history of presidential transitions, how President-Elect Biden has fared during his transition, and what the early appointments look like in both the Cabinet and the White House. So first off, let me just start by putting the American presidential transition into a little bit of context and give you a brief historical overview.

I think it's important to note that what we have in the United States regarding the transition is uniquely American. We basically have a 78-day period in which a president-elect and his team will put together a group of personnel and will try to do their best to learn what's going on throughout the government so that they can be prepared to takeover on January 20th. It's important to try to provide some sort of explanation of our unique system. And one way to do so is to think about our government in the shape of a pyramid, with the most senior officials at the top of the pyramid, and what our country does every four or every eight years is lop off the top of that pyramid, such that incoming administrations have roughly 4,000 political appointees, 1,300 of which require Senate confirmation. So it is a vast undertaking, and personnel is the primary focus during that transition phase.

In terms of history, I think it's easiest to start with Dwight Eisenhower, and that's because in 1933 there was a passage of the Twentieth Amendment, which changed the inauguration date from March to January, and effectively shortened the transition period. Dwight D. Eisenhower was the first president who had just a 78-day transition period. Interestingly, correspondence shows that Harry Truman invited him to the White House to meet with himself and the Cabinet, and Dwight D. Eisenhower turned down the invitation. And other than that we didn't really know much about transitions. It wasn't until John F. Kennedy in 1960 decided to use some of his campaign funds so that he could provide some funding to two individuals, Clark Clifford, a well-known former Democratic White House staffer and very knowledgeable in government, and a presidency scholar named Richard Neustadt. John F. Kennedy did not want to enter the White House without having a better sense of what was expected and what he needed to do. He hired them and utilized campaign funds to hire more people for a transition. Shortly thereafter, we had for the first time in American history, Congress getting involved with presidential transitions and a recognition that this is a formal process.

So in 1963 we had the passage of the Presidential Transitions Act, and that's the first time that the government recognized that this 78-day period is very critical. Since then, it's been sort of routine. You hear a little bit about who's in charge of the presidential transition team, you get a sense for the individuals on a campaign working diligently as they go forward, but there's really not much drama associated with it. When we look back, since 1963, there have been several amendments to this act, and the most significant amendments occurred after 9/11. The 9/11 Commission recommended that there be much more access to national security and top secret documents for this incoming team. And as such, that's the most pivotal change that has occurred since 1963 with the Presidential Transitions Act.

In addition, this act also enabled the incoming transition team to circulate throughout the government to interview existing staffers and bureaucrats to get a sense of what they can expect, what are the pressing issues, what are the crises that they need to worry about when they take office on January 20th. Most notable in the history of transitions would be 2001, and that is simply because there was the contested election in Florida, which truncated the transition time. Nevertheless, apparently Dick Cheney was preparing for assuming the presidency from his living room as the Bush team was going about getting ready for assuming office after January 20th.

In 2008, that particular transition was thought to be the gold standard, because President Bush made it very clear to his staff that they needed to do everything they could to make the transition very smooth for the Obama team. In 2016, Obama did the same and was very serious and instructed his staff to prepare briefings and documents for the next president, whomever it might be. It turns out it was President Trump, and while the Obama administration very carefully prepared for this transition, President Trump and his transition team were much less interested in many of the activities and many of the meetings and tabletop exercises. Across the board, there tended to be sparse attendance.

It's also important to note that the day after the election, President Trump fired Chris Christie, who was in charge of the transition. According to Michael Lewis's book, *The Fifth Risk*, apparently Mike Pence, et al. who oversaw the transition essentially threw away all the work and the documents that Chris Christie and his crew has prepared. So that is a highly unusual transition. Despite the Obama's best effort to help them get prepared for assuming office, it wasn't reciprocated. Nevertheless, it was peaceful and smooth.

So here we are in 2020, and what has happened in 2020? Similar to what we've seen throughout the Trump administration in terms of shattering norms, a little bit of chaos. The biggest issue in this transition was that the GSA Administrator, who was required and who is able to release the funding for the transition, refused to ascertain or certify the election results, such that President-Elect Biden could start to receive access across the federal government, start to receive the President's daily brief, and start to obtain security clearances for his staff members. All of that was delayed by almost three weeks, which represents roughly a quarter of the transition time. Once they gained access, around November 23rd, there were pockets of dissent in the Department of Defense, in OMB [Office of Management and Budget], and at the U.S. Trade Representative's office, where they were unwilling to give the Biden transition team access or to help them.

I would say that, despite these two distinct disadvantages, the Biden team has, in reality, been working since last spring. Once they knew that then Vice President Biden would be the Democratic nominee, I'm sure that they were working on vetting and trying to determine which candidates that they would nominate if there was the possibility that they won the presidential election. I think that the United States has benefited immensely by the extensive experience

that both the president-elect and his transition team have. Many of these individuals worked for President Obama. Several even worked for President Clinton as well. The vice president and president-elect himself, of course, has eight years of executive branch experience. At a time when we lost almost 25% of the transition period, it helps immensely to have people on the transition team that know how the government works. They know what needs to be done and how to do it.

So how have they done? I spoke about the fact that there are roughly 4,000 presidential appointments that need to be made, and of those roughly 1,300 require Senate confirmation. So far, President-Elect Biden has assembled the 15 key cabinet members that are in the line of presidential succession; he has hired the most women; he has appointed the first Native American; he has appointed the first woman to become Secretary of the Treasury; he has appointed the first black to become the Secretary of Defense; he's hired the first Hispanic to become the Secretary of the Department of Homeland Security. There are many historic firsts. If you also look further and look at his White House staff appointments, again you see more women than any of his predecessors, going back to Reagan. And you also see a large number of non-white appointments. In addition to that, the White House Transition Project has a pace tracker, where they compare the pace of appointments, going all the way back to President-Elect Jimmy Carter's transition, and it shows that despite the three-week delay, President Biden's pace of appointments is ahead of all of his seven predecessors. So in addition to what will be creating the most diverse set of political presidential appointees in American history, they are well ahead of pace compared to their predecessors.

This is a historic period. It's a historic transition, because of the Ascertainment. I'm hoping that going forward that the Ascertainment provision has some sort of reform that makes it black and white as to whether the winner of the presidential election can be determined sooner. We don't need delays like that, especially in a period where we have a coronavirus. The economy is experiencing extreme volatility. We have high levels of racial tension. This was a bad time for that to happen. But despite this truncated transition, the Biden team has done just about as good a job as they could have.

CHRIS LU:

Thank you all for having me. I've been asked to speak about the role of domestic policies in the election and in the impact on U.S. foreign policy. Before I do that though, I can't not talk about the events of last Wednesday. What we saw was an insurrection, an unprecedented attack on the capital that was incited by the president of the United States. It's not something that we see in really any civilized country. And the reason I flag all of this is if you look at the visual images of the people marching on the Capitol, they weren't marching for tax cuts. They weren't marching for lower health care. They were marching to take back their country, and it was a broader symbol of the election being stolen, and their way of life being changed. And in many ways, last Wednesday's riot exemplified what the election was about. It wasn't about policy, it was about the character of the nominees, their personalities. It was their visions. If you look at President Trump, his slogan, “Make America Great Again,” harkens back to a time that his followers

believe was a better time than where we are now. Joe Biden talked on the campaign trail from day one about this being a fight for the soul of our nation. So this election, much like many elections, wasn't about contrasting policies. It was about contrasting visions, contrasting personalities.

That being said, there were underlying policy differences, and the most significant one was the handling of the COVID pandemic. The president's mishandling early on, the continued flouting of public health guidelines, and the unprecedented recession that was caused by this pandemic really was a pivot point and a way for Joe Biden to talk more about his vision, his sense of leadership, and it really highlighted in many ways the contrasting policies between the two candidates, whether it was on immigration and tighter borders, whether it was on the availability of health care, whether it was on the systemic income, the systemic economic inequalities and how, throughout the pandemic, those that were being most affected from a health perspective, and from an economic perspective, were often poor people and people of color. So while it is fair to say policy wasn't what drove people's decision in this election, those underlying policy differences, speak to different visions of where the country should go and different leadership styles.

As you look forward to the policies of the Biden administration in how the domestic policies will influence foreign policy, it is fair to say that this administration (the new administration that will come in) will be more engaged with multilateral institutions like the United Nations. The president-elect has already talked about rejoining the World Health Organization. He's already talked about re-entering the Paris Climate Change agreements. He's talked more broadly about strengthening our allies, not just with our two allies on our border here in North America, but also those in Europe and Asia.

But what you don't hear this president-elect talking about is free trade. Now, Joe Biden was a vice president who voted for the North American Free Trade Agreement, who helped push the Trans-Pacific Partnership during the Obama administration, and what you see more broadly in this country, notwithstanding the change in parties, is this really powerful nationalistic sentiment that drives much of the economic policies, frankly in both political parties. It is difficult to conceive in this current political climate in the United States, regardless of who is the president and regardless of who controls Congress, that a free trade agreement like Trans-Pacific Partnership could get done. Obviously, President Trump was able to get changes made to NAFTA. I think most people that looked at that would say, those were fairly cosmetic changes that did not have a great significance.

And I do think when you peel back what President-Elect Biden has talked about in his broad “Build Back Better” proposals, he's talked a lot about how do we buy more American products through the federal government buying program, how do we bring more jobs back to the United States. Again, he's not using the nationalistic rhetoric of Donald Trump, but underlying all of that is many of the same themes. And while you will see greater engagement internationally from this president and it will be in a very constructive, multilateral way, it won't be this kind of

transactional, one-on-one way that Donald Trump liked to do business. I do think the domestic politics within the United States make it very challenging to engage economically with many countries in that free trade world that had existed in previous presidencies. I would also argue, more importantly, that there is right now in the country of the United States a very strong anti-China sentiment. And that really is one, unfortunately for Chinese Americans like me, I think will have significant implications for those of us living here in the country, as well as the U.S. policies towards China.

SYARU SHIRLEY LIN:
Thank you, Chris. Let's turn it over to the China perspective. Professor XIN Qiang, who is sitting in a room with hundreds of people.

XIN QIANG:
I think now life in China has returned back to normal and I hope that soon the world will also return to normalcy after the pandemic. It's a great opportunity to share some of my observations in this conference, and thank you, Shirley. Last October, the CCP [Chinese Communist Party] held the Fifth Plenum of the Central Committee and issued a communiqué that outlined a blueprint for the next five years' national development. It's really very hard to explain the wide spectrum of numerous domestic and foreign policies in just eight minutes, but I will try to provide some of my observations.

First and foremost, I think the Communiqué pointed out a strategic assessment of the international environment, as well as the domestic policy priorities of the CCP in the upcoming five years. First, the Communiqué declared that "peace and development" remain the theme of the era. It sounds cliché, but it means comprehensive modernization and national development will be the unequivocal top priority for Chinese leadership. And second, the Communiqué stated that China remains in a "period of strategic opportunity," which means China thinks it will have a future with more opportunities than challenges. Thirdly, the Communiqué warned that China must be cautious of various risks and challenges, and coordinate the requirement of National Security and economic and social development.

Concerning the risk, I think Beijing is worrying about tridimensional challenges. The first is the fact that international institution rules and norms have been hurt significantly. In the past few years, concurrent with the anti-globalization and populism movement throughout the world, we can see that international organizations can be discarded, international treaties and agreements can be torn apart like wastepaper, and unilateral sanctions can be imposed presumptuously without any effective check and balance.

The second risk is the unprecedented deterioration of U.S.-China relations. The Trump administration launched a whole-of-government--or even whole-of-society—suppression against China. And now the relations between these two biggest economies in the world have, in what I've termed, become a "Three Noes Relations": 1) no mutual trust 2) no high-level political interaction, and 3) no cooperation.

The third risk is the influence of the COVID-19 pandemic. Overshadowed by the pandemic, the global supply chain has been breached, and no one knows when and how the pandemic will come to an end.

In view of these aforementioned risks and challenges looming ahead, China has no choice, in my view, but to establish a kind of bottom-line mentality, or in other words, to "think the impossible." China must be ready for the worst case scenario and prepare to cope with potential uncertainty and instability. Given a very complicated situation, both at home and abroad, I think there are three goals for China's future national development, which means to achieve high-quality, sustainable, and secure development. And the major policy leverage is the new development pattern featuring so-called "dual circulation."

The first goal is high-quality development. For example, China will adopt higher environmental protection standards, instead of simply pursuing GDP growth at the cost of the environment and the health of the people. China will promote China's advancements into the mid- to high-end of the global industrial supply innovation and value chain, based on a high-tech driven development model.

The second goal is sustainable development. I think there are three fundamental requirements for that. The first is to deal with the gap between the urban and rural areas, and China will invest more resources to support revival of the rural areas, as well as to push forward a new round of county-centered urbanization. And the second is to deal with the gap between the rich and the poor. China will continue to strengthen the effort of poverty elimination by providing better career training programs, creating high-quality employment opportunities, and improving education and healthcare systems. And the third is to deal with the regional gap, especially between the eastern and western regions. Beijing will invest more resources to fulfill the development of the western and central regions of China, as well as to re-energize the northeast regional economy.

And the third goal is secure development, and as the Communiqué stated, amid the rising tide of protectionism and unilateralism, China must give a strong boost to unleash the potential of domestic demand and secure the development of domestic industrial chains, and it also contributed to the unprecedented emphasis on food security, seed security and farmland security.

In order to achieve the three goals, China will nurture a strong domestic market and establish a new development pattern, as I said before, featuring "dual circulation," which means China will improve domestic circulation, and let domestic and international circulations reinforce each other, supporting consumption in an all-round way and expanding investments.

SYARU SHIRLEY LIN:

Thank you, Professor XIN Qiang. We have a host of questions, all of them are very good, but

they're all for individual panelists. So I'm going to do that very soon, as soon as I organize that in my mind. We can start with professor XIN Qiang and then in reverse order to Chris, Katie, and Larry with a common question.

First for Professor Xin: How much has China's strained relationship with the U.S. been a factor in designing the Fifth Plenum's five-year economic plan? And do you think relations with the U.S. will shape Chinese foreign and domestic policies during Xi's next term in the office?

And for our American panelists: how much was China, and international affairs more generally, a factor in this election cycle? And do you think relations with China will shape America's domestic and foreign policy during the Biden administration? If so, how?

XIN QIANG:
Thank you for the question. For every generation of the leadership of China, we think the U.S.-China relationship is very important, and it's also, as always, the key factor influencing the foreign policy-making of China in the past several decades. And that's why President Xi reiterated that we have 1,000 reasons to have a good U.S.-China relation and we have no reason to make it bad. So I think that especially in the past few years, the deterioration of U.S.-China relations has hurt the interest of the U.S. as well as China. And for Beijing, we think the major international risk comes from suppression, or maybe you can say the check and balance, from the U.S., and we can see that the policy leverage used by the Trump administration has destroyed all the cooperation between our two states, and we hope that after President Biden takes office, U.S.-China relations, like life here in China, can return to normalcy.

CHRIS LU:
As I mentioned, I'm not sure that policy ever really played much of a role in the ultimate vote for most people in this election, certainly even fewer for foreign policy, and even fewer than that for China. That being said, I think sentiments toward China were certainly an underlying factor in the broader themes of the election. You have a president who blamed the coronavirus pandemic on China and, certainly on the economic front, played up the way that he stood up to China with tariffs, and then concluded a free trade agreement, which then led Biden to try to say, "Well, no, your approach to China was wrong. It really wasn't standing up, you were actually being overly conciliatory. I'm tougher on China than you." So this was really kind of a one-upmanship that I'm not really sure was the most in-depth, thoughtful conversation of what our real policy differences are with China, whether it's on military issues, climate change, economic cooperation, trade, intellectual property--the whole range of issues. And so I think it's fair to say it was mostly in this presidential election more about slogans and personality regarding China instead of actual policy differences.

KATHRYN DUNN TENPAS:
Right. And I would just add that, generally speaking, most Americans are not very well attuned to international affairs, and the overwhelming concerns related to COVID is not just people's personal health, but the incredible economic impact, in addition to an administration that

appeared to be mishandling and not creating a central message on how to deal with it. I think that most Americans were really preoccupied with the virus, and that, in many ways, diminished the impact. Although, as Chris pointed out, there was definitely some back-and-forth between Biden and Trump on China policy, but generally speaking if you're going at the very base level of voters in Indiana, voters in Arizona, and what were they concerned about, I think it was largely the economy.

In terms of China in the future, it will absolutely shape future policies, but I think it's one sort of factor amongst many. I also think it's important to point out that even though it may seem as though we're getting a reset or reboot when President-Elect Biden is sworn in on January 20th, it's also important to realize that the presidency is this continuous stream of issues and personnel, and that Biden has to step into the stream and take command, but he's still inheriting the prior four years of President Trump. He has to work past that to establish his own diplomatic relations, his own priorities, and that will take a while. So I think that in the short term, not much will change.

LARRY SABATO:
China was not a major factor in the election. It didn't show up in pre-election polling. It didn't show up in either of the very large exit polls taken on Election Day, and also with the pre-election voters. The only real role that China played in the election was as a punching bag for Donald Trump. He's the sort of politician who always has to have someone or something to blame. And because his administration had done a *truly* terrible job on the vaccines, and on the COVID crisis generally, and had contributed to the high death rate by refusing to wear masks, refusing to social distance, and all the rest of it, he had to have somebody to blame, and he chose to blame China. And this played beautifully with his xenophobic, right-wing base. They loved it.

There aren't enough of them to win, though. That's the key element. And you say, “Well, he won in 2016.” No, he won because some independents and third-party candidates were running, rather selfishly, and they took a large enough proportion of the vote away from Hillary Clinton so that she couldn't win the election, even with a three million vote plurality. So maybe China should have been a larger factor in the election, but it wasn't. The election was about COVID; it was about the economy; and, most important of all—it was about Donald Trump—and whether people had had enough and whether they could even imagine four more years of that.

SYARU SHIRLEY LIN:
Perfect. Larry, if I could continue with you. Now we go to the individual questions. So several questions for you. Where will the GOP go after this, and also how did Trump lose the election? Perhaps to many in China, it seems he won an historic record number of votes, so did he lose because of COVID or is there more than that? And if you don't mind, Larry, let me give each of the panelists their questions, so they can think about it while we go down the list.

And for Katie, are our American democratic institutions dead, based on what happened in the last few days and the last four years, or is this something of a temporary phenomenon? Because

you talked about institutions, is there a lasting impact on American democracy with what has happened?

For Chris, there are many questions, but first of all on the three branches of government, people in China are asking is the division of power going to become a partisan battle in the next few years? And also do you think the "Free and Open Indo-Pacific" narrative will be continued under the Biden administration, and also how long will anti-China sentiment last, in your opinion, based on what you had said?

For Professor XIN Qiang, you're one against three, so you have a lot of questions, and I think you should just pick the ones you'd like to answer. What is the role of Belt and Road Initiative in the next Five-Year Plan, since you didn't mention it? Also, can you talk about environmental policy? How can China coordinate its policy in what is called "fragmented authoritarianism," and how can China protect the environment and form coherent policy? And lastly, for the American audience, can we imagine a different policy under Xi Jinping with regards to the Uyghurs in Xinjiang?

LARRY SABATO:

First, you asked me really two separate questions. Donald Trump received 74 million votes, and the questioner is certainly correct in suggesting that that is an enormous number and more than any presidential candidate has ever gotten, with only one exception, and the exception is Joe Biden. He received 81 million votes, and in any language 81 million is a lot more than 74 million. The reason the turnout was so large was because Donald Trump stirs emotions, on both sides, and his people were excited to keep him, and a much larger group of people were determined to get rid of him, and they did. So it doesn't mean a thing, in a sense. You had close to 160 million people voting in this election. That was a lot more than 137 million in 2016 and that was also a pretty good turnout. This was a superb turnout. It was the largest turnout in a presidential election in the United States since 1900, but just because Donald Trump constantly repeats the number doesn't make it more important than it is.

As far as where the Republican Party goes, that's an important question, and nobody is sure precisely. An interesting survey came out today, and surveys didn't do so well and in 2016 or 2020, but this was a pretty good one. It was a good sampling, and the particulars checked out pretty well. And it showed that President Trump, who has almost always had an approval rating somewhere around the percentage of the vote he's gotten in two elections (46%), sometimes he would drift down to around 40%, but basically he had, as we like to say, "A low ceiling and a high floor." He didn't vary very much. Well, this survey showed that his approval ratings are now down to 33% and 60% disapprove of the job performance of Donald Trump. Why is that significant? Because, for the very first time, with one exception that I'll mention, he has lost part of his base. They were disgusted, as most Americans were, that he incited an insurrection, and that his people---at his encouragement---invaded a co-equal branch of government, and it resulted in five deaths, in addition to mayhem, and projecting American democracy in the worst possible way around the world, and he'll never be forgiven for that. Believe me. Mark my words,

he will never be forgiven for that. And that's why he's on the edge of the impeachment. Conviction in the Senate is impossible, because of the number of votes needed.

But he's lost his base. He only lost it one other time, and that was back in August of 2017, when his people showed up in large numbers in the place where I'm sitting in Charlottesville, Virginia, and I'm on the Lawn of the University of Virginia where all those neo-Nazis marched down our lawn and then later, in another part of Charlottesville, resulting in the death of a young lady who was opposed to their political aims, but this is more important and it's more permanent. If you lose part of your base, and he has, because it's no longer very useful to be associated with Donald Trump, at least in the vast majority of places that are competitive. In deeply republican red states, it probably still benefits you to be associated with Donald Trump, but that's not where the vote is. So I think that right at the end he's blown it. And the interesting thing is, historically, almost all presidents who've been defeated or who are retiring after two terms (the maximum limit allowed), their popularity goes up in their final couple of months. Donald Trump's has sunk dramatically, and people who are well-known don't even want to be around him. Take the Presidential Medal of Freedom, which used to be prestigious but no longer is because of the people Donald Trump has been giving it to, he decided to have his last Medal of Honor winner be a very popular football coach here in the United States. Well, just minutes ago, while we were chatting, that football coach decided he would decline the honor. He doesn't even want to be in the same room with Donald Trump and accept it.

Those things are signals of where someone like Trump is going. The leadership of the Republican Party has been very blunt behind the scenes, in the last week or so at least. They want to cut off the Trump ties, just as soon as they possibly can. They wouldn't cry a tear if he resigned tonight. They want him gone, and they're going to do everything possible to make sure he doesn't come back. And the Congress in both Houses is looking for ways to ban him from ever holding public office again. They may not be able to do it in terms of impeachment and conviction in the Senate, which normally is what happens as a product of conviction in the Senate on impeachment charges, but just an hour ago I had a conversation with Senator Tim Kaine, who's a member of the U.S. Senate. You may recall, he was Secretary of State Hillary Clinton's running mate in 2016, and he proposed on the record some ways that Congress will do it, and he believes that it will happen. He's well in touch with both sides in the Senate. They will find ways to keep Donald Trump out. If they could keep Trump out, the Republicans have at least a chance--a chance--to get past the disasters of Donald Trump, because if they don't do it, I think things will continue to decline for them. Thank you, Shirley.

SYARU SHIRLEY LIN:

Thank you, Larry. We've run sort of out of time, so if I can ask the remaining panelists to answer within one minute, Katie.

KATHRYN DUNN TENPAS:

You asked me the question of whether I thought that America institutions were dead, and I would say, by no means are they dead. However, the last four years have really done a number

on important aspects of our government, like personnel in particular, the shattering of norms and of civil discourse, and it will take some time to recover. I'm hopeful that the Biden administration will be able to turn the ship of state into a better direction, and I think that it can. I think the American system of government is resilient and we will recover, but we need some time to heal.

CHRIS LU:

I was asked about the separation of powers, and I'd simply say that in the president-elect, Joe Biden, you have somebody who spent 36 years in the U.S. Senate, someone who chaired the Senate Judiciary Committee. He understands well and respects the important role of the three branches of government, and he will obviously push hard for his agenda as president, but he will respect those institutions of democracy, as well as the rule of law.

XIN QIANG:

So many questions, and one minute? For the question about the Belt and Road Initiative, I think in the future, China's government will continue to strengthen and push this initiative forward, especially to integrate it with the strategies of other countries, and maybe integrate it with the regional architecture in the peripheral areas. And second, for the question about environmental protection, I think that's a key focus of the Chinese government, and we can see that China is very actively trying to cooperate with the United States and European countries to safeguard the Paris Agreement, and I think this will provide a very good window of opportunity for cooperation, and for the Biden administration to actively coordinate and cooperate with China in the near future.

For the question about Xinjiang, I think the facts speak louder than words, and I have been to Xinjiang several times, and I think the reality is very different from the picture described by some Western media and so-called experts. My own experience has taught me that de-extremism and de-radicalization efforts in Xinjiang have been very effective and efficient, and the stability and security in Xinjiang is far better than we imagined, even for Chinese outside Xinjiang. When you walk around the street of Urumqi, you don't need to worry that you will be shot, or be attacked by terrorists, and the security and stability in Xinjiang will not only be beneficial to China, but also to all the neighboring countries, as well as to the whole world. I hope that the whole world, including the United States, will have a much better and deeper understanding of that. Thank you.

SYARU SHIRLEY LIN:

Thank you to all the panelists. We're only slightly behind time. I really appreciate Larry, Katie, Chris and Professor XIN Qiang, and we look forward to Panel II and Ambassador Steve Mull next.

[1] This audio transcript was automatically transcribed for Zoom, with manual corrections and editing for clarity and brevity by the UVA China Office.